

II. ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

During the strategic planning process, Action Team members identified several principal assets and challenges for Downtown Stockton.

ASSETS

STRATEGIC LOCATION AND EASY ACCESS

Stockton is regionally well connected to San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento, and maintains close ties to the rural areas of the Central Valley. The City is situated near major freeway connections (i.e., Highway 4, Highway 99 and Interstate 5) and is well connected to the outlying areas by San Joaquin Regional Transit District (SJRTD) bus system, Altamont Commuter Express (ACE), Amtrak and other railways, the Stockton Metropolitan Airport and Delta Waterways. Future transit improvements include the renovation of the Multi Modal Station at the eastern edge of Downtown and a new Downtown Transit Station for the SJRTD bus system, which will greatly improve the experience of public transit users.



Downtown Stockton is well connected by public transit such as the Amtrak (left), ACE (middle) and the SJRTD (right) bus system.

GOVERNMENT CENTER

Downtown Stockton benefits from the presence of numerous government agencies, offices, and other civic uses. County government offices occupy over 800,000 square feet of office space in the Downtown area. City and State government services and 22 separate courtroom facilities are also located Downtown. These entities provide many jobs, attracting thousands of people daily to the Downtown area.



Stockton City Hall

PUBLIC AMENITIES

Downtown Stockton benefits from the area's attractive setting and unique physical features. First, the location of Downtown at the head of the Stockton Deep Water Channel along the San Joaquin River allowed for the development of the State's largest inland port. Equally appreciated for its scenic beauty, the waterfront also provides a marina and staging point for the waterway's various parks, plazas and recreational activities.

Secondly, Downtown enjoys a walkable, pedestrian-scale street grid system. It has a strong network of parks and other public open spaces. The area also benefits from well-established neighborhoods in close proximity to the central business district. These surrounding neighborhoods hold great potential for expanding residential and commercial interconnections into the Downtown core. In addition, the historic architecture of many of the buildings in Downtown provides an attractive environment and a unique character.



The marina along the Stockton Channel is a great public asset for Downtown Stockton



The Weber Point Event Center is host to a wide variety of festivals and concerts



Downtown is adjacent to residential neighborhoods with tree-lined streets

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Downtown boasts a wide range of investment and development opportunities. New development proposals (e.g., Downtown Cineplex, Mixed Use Waterfront Development, Downtown Transit Center, etc) will add vital energy to the commercial core. In addition, the presence of several potential infill development projects and renovation of many of the buildings in Downtown will provide a wealth of opportunities for creating an increasingly vibrant City center. Downtown also benefits from strong City and public support and from the momentum of recent revitalization and Downtown redevelopment efforts. While building on its own economic vitality, Downtown Stockton is poised to capture additional market opportunities from outlying and regional demands. Higher land costs in the regional centers such as San Francisco and Sacramento make Downtown Stockton an attractive location for new and expanding offices, light industrial and high tech research businesses.



Development opportunities along the waterfront such as the proposed Mixed Use Waterfront Development (left) will add vital energy to Downtown Stockton. Source: Monte Vista Development, 2001



Proposed renovation of historic structures such as Hotel Stockton (left) will improve the image of Downtown

CHALLENGES

IMAGE / PERCEPTION

Downtown Stockton is often perceived as an area that is unclean, unsafe and unexciting. Many local residents are disconnected with Downtown, and many Downtown workers leave the area at the end of the workday. Numerous homeless people on Downtown streets and the abundance of dilapidated Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Hotels add to the perception that Downtown is not a safe place to visit. The area's image must be improved to create a safe, clean, credible and vital urban center. A cohesive, cooperative branding and marketing plan is a major step to change perceptions toward Downtown and to attract people throughout the region.



Successful rehabilitation of buildings such as the Mansion House (above) helps in removing physical blight, thereby improving the overall image of Downtown.

Additionally, the City of Stockton has implemented an ongoing program to address and eliminate the substandard condition of Downtown hotels and SROs. Unsafe facilities that do not meet current code requirements could potentially be rehabilitated or torn down.

NEED FOR PEOPLE “GENERATORS”

Despite its walkable pedestrian scale, historic street grid system, nearby parks and open spaces, and numerous restaurants, Downtown Stockton still lacks a vibrant commercial urban environment. Strong retail anchors, entertainment options, and an active nightlife are missing from the City center. Patrons visiting the area during the day are often gone by 5:00 p.m. which is when workers from local offices and businesses leave the Downtown to go home. While there is little “after-hours” presence in Downtown, many of the elements needed to create a vibrant and exciting urban environment exist, and are waiting for a strong revitalization effort.



While the City has made great civic improvements to make Downtown beautiful, such as the streetscape improvements on Center Street (above), it still lacks a vibrant urban environment.

UNFULFILLED HOUSING DEMAND

Housing is an important component of any revitalization effort. The presence of housing in Stockton's City center is limited to a few areas and is dominated by single room occupancy (SRO) hotels. More housing in Downtown Stockton would help to activate the retail core and help increase the sense of safety and security on the streets. The City also needs to attract more employees to rent and own these new residential units. This new Downtown housing should include a broad spectrum of types incorporating high densities and a mixture of uses (including live-work uses) in support of nearby commercial environments. There is great opportunity for the development of housing for a range of family types and incomes along the City's waterfront, through the rehabilitation of historic buildings, and redevelopment of dilapidated and abandoned buildings in the Downtown.



Various housing opportunities sites exist in Downtown such as along the City's waterfront (left) and through the rehabilitation of historic buildings such as the Henery Apartments (right), which when realized, will help in revitalizing Downtown.

LONG TERM PARKING REQUIREMENTS

While Downtown is easily accessible by car from the interchanges off Interstate 5 and Highway 4, many perceive that Downtown lacks parking. Furthermore, pedestrian connections are weak between Downtown's activity areas and major attractions, and the surrounding neighborhoods. New wayfinding and signage systems are needed to more efficiently direct people to Downtown existing parking structures, events and destinations.



While new parking structures such as the Steven Eberhardt building (left) have tackled the parking requirements in Downtown, the perception remains that Downtown lacks adequate parking.